

AMATEUR COMPUTER USERS GROUP HOMEBREW COMPUTER CLUB... you name it.

Are you building your own computer? Terminal? T V Typewriter? I/O device?
or some other digital black-magic box?

Or are you buying time on a time-sharing service?

If so, you might like to come to a gathering of people with likeminded interests.
Exchange information, swap ideas, talk shop, help work on a project, whatever...

This simple announcement brought 32 enthusiastic people together March 5th at Gordon's garage. We arrived from all over the Bay Area--Berkeley to Los Gatos. After a quick round of introductions, the questions, comments, reports, info on supply sources, etc., poured forth in a spontaneous spirit of sharing. Six in the group already had homebrew systems up and running. Some were designing theirs around the 8008 microprocessor chip; several had sent for the Altair 8800 kit. The group contained a good cross section of both hardware experts and software programmers.

We got into a short dispute over HEX or Octal until someone mentioned that if you are setting the switches by hand it doesn't make any difference. Talked about other standards: re-start locations? input ports? better operating code for the 8080? paper tape or cassettes or paper & pencil listings? Even ASCII should not be assumed the standard: many 5 channel Model 15 TTYs are about and in use by RTTY folks. Home computing is a hobby for the experimenter and explorer of what can be done cheaply. I doubt that standards will ever be completely agreed on because of the trade-offs in design and because what's available for one amateur may not be obtainable for another.

Talked about what we want to do as a club: quantity buying, cooperation on software, need to develop a cross assembler, share experience in hardware design, classes possibly, tips on what's currently available where, etc. Marty passed out M.I.'s Application Manual on the MF8008 and let it be known that he could get anything we want. Steve gave a report on his recent visit to MITS. About 1500 Altairs have been shipped out so far. MITS expects to send out 1100 more this month. No interfaces or peripherals are available until they catch up with the mainframe back orders. Bob passed out the latest PCC and showed the Altair 8800 which had arrived that week (the red LEDs blink and flash nicely). Ken unboxed and demonstrated the impressive Phi-Deck tape transport.

What will people do with a computer in their home? Well, we asked that question and the variety of responses show that the imagination of people has been underestimated. Uses ranged from the private secretary functions: text editing, mass storage, memory, etc., to control of house utilities: heating, alarms, sprinkler system, auto tune-up, cooking, etc., to GAMES: all kinds, TV graphics, x - y plotting, making music, small robots and turtles, and other educational uses, to small business applications and neighborhood memory networks. I expect home computers will be used in unconventional ways--most of which no one has thought of yet.

We decided to start a newsletter and meet again in two weeks. As the meeting broke up into private conversations, Marty held up an 8008 chip, asked who could use it, and gave it away!

NEXT MEETING WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19th, 7 PM at
Stanford's Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, Conference room,
Arastradero Road in Portola Valley. Look for this road sign:
D C Power Lab

Announcement:

Texas Instruments Learning Center is presenting an early morning home television series, April 15 - 18, on "Introduction to Microprocessors." In the San Jose - Bay Area this program will be on channel 11 at 6:00 AM.

